

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OC-05 CCO-00

SY-05 OPR-02 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 SCCT-01

EB-07 AID-05 PC-01 /087 W

----- 030673

O P 211315Z APR 76

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3934

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO PRIORITY

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON PRIORITY

COMNAVTEEKOM WASHDC PRIORITY

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN PRIORITY

COMIDEASTFOR PRIORITY

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA PRIORITY

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI PRIORITY

CNO WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 00325

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS ET

SUBJECT: POWER LINES TO ASMARA CUT

1. TWO PARELLEL POWER LINES FROM ASMARA'S MAIN POWER PLANT AT

BELEZA, 18 KM. NORTH OF CITY, WERE CUT BY INSURGENT EXPLOSIVE
DEVICES AT 2330 AND 0130 HOURS NIGHT OF APRIL 20-21. METAL POLE
TRANSMISSION LINE WAS SEVERED 5 KM FROM ASMARA AS RESULT FELLING
OF FOUR POLES. STEEL TOWER TRANSMISSION LINE WAS CUT 7 KM. FROM
ASMARA BY TOPPLING OF TWO STEEL TOWERS.

2. EFFECT OF THIS INTERDICTION OF POWER LINES WAS POWER OUTAGE

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IN ASMARA UNTIL 0900 HOURS WHEN KAGNEW GENERATORS WERE BROUGHT

ON LINE TO PROVIDE ELECTRICITY FOR STREET LIGHTING, RESIDENTIAL POWER, HOSPITALS AND WATER DISTRIBUTION. KAGNEW POWER WAS BROUGHT ON LINE GRADUALLY AND CAN DEVELOP UP TO 2.6 MEGAWATTS, ADEQUATE FOR ALL REQUIREMENTS ABOVE, BUT NOT SUFFICIENT FOR INDUSTRIAL NEEDS. POWER LINE FROM BELEZA TO MAIN MUNICIPAL WATER PUMPING STATION REMAINS INTACT. LIKEWISE POWER TRANSMISSION LINE FROM MASSAWA TO ASMARA REMAINS OPERATIVE, BUT IT JOINS ASMARA POWER GRID AT SUBSTATION NORTH OF LINE BREAK.

3. RELIABLE ESTIMATES OF TIME REQUIRED TO REPAIR TRANSMISSION LINES INDICATE THAT THIS INCIDENT COULD DISRUPT INDUSTRY FOR SEVERAL WEEKS. METAL POLE TRANSMISSION LINE SHOULD BE REPAIRED IN TWO TO THREE DAYS, WHICH WILL REMOVE MOST OF POWER PRODUCTION BURDEN FROM KAGNEW, WHICH WOULD THEN BE USED TO PROVIDE POWER TO LOCAL INDUSTRY, UP TO 90 PERCENT OF NORMAL INDUSTRIAL USAGE. REPAIR OF STEEL TOWER TRANSMISSION LINE WILL REQUIRE SEVERAL WEEKS AT MINIMUM. MOST LOCAL INDUSTRIAL PLANTS HAVE STANDBY GENERATORS, BUT ONLY FEW REMAINING FOOD PROCESSING PLANTS, SAVA (GLASS FACTORY) AND AMAP (MATCH FACTORY) HAVE GENERATOR CAPACITY WHICH APPROACH NORMAL POWER REQUIREMENT DRAWN FROM EELPA. OTHER PLANTS' GENERATORS ARE ADEQUATE ONLY TO FURNISH POWER FOR LIGHTS AND OFFICE MACHINES.

4. COMMENT: IT SHOULD BE RECALLED THAT WHEN BELEZA GENERATORS WERE HIT BY INSURGENTS DURING HEAVY FIGHTING IN FEB. 1975, NEXT NIGHT ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO DESTROY FUEL STORAGE FOR KAGNEW POWER PLANT. IN VIEW THIS, ADDITIONAL SECURITY IN FORM OF ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS STATIONED OUTSIDE PERIMETER DEFENSES TO REACT TO FURTHER INCIDENTS HAS BEEN REQUESTED BY NAVCOMMUNIT

AND EPMG MILITARY PROMISES TO IMPLEMENT THESE MEASURES. IMPACT OF THIS INCIDENT ON INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION MIGHT BE SIGNIFICANT IF ASMARA'S INDUSTRY WAS OPERATED ON NORMAL BASIS OF ECONOMIC VIABILITY, BUT AS EPMG'S DEMONSTRATED PRIME CONCERN IS MAINTAINING EMPLOYMENT REGARDLESS OF ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATION, WE WOULD EXPECT LOCAL FACTORIES TO REQUIRE EMPLOYEES TO REPORT FOR DUTY AS IF NO PROBLEM EXISTED.

SHERRY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: EXPLOSIVES, ELECTRIC POWER, UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ASMARA00325
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760151-0153
From: ASMARA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760441/aaaabijn.tel
Line Count: 98
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 MAY 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <10 SEP 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POWER LINES TO ASMARA CUT
TAGS: PINS, ET
To: STATE ADDIS ABABA
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006